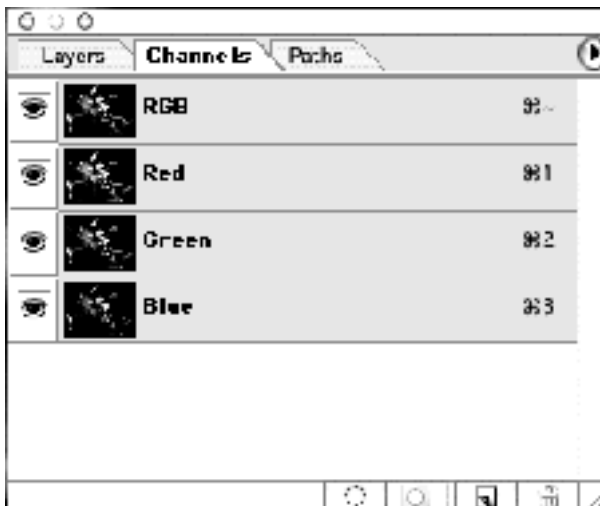


Tutorial 4 Alpha Channels

Every normal RGB file is made up of 3 channels of information - Red Green and Blue. These are visible in the Channels palette along with an RGB channel that shows all 3 at once. This is the normal view and selection for working on the image.



The eye beside each channel allows you to hide or show the channel. The channel will be highlighted if it is currently active. You can click on the thumbnail or name of the channel to highlight it (much as in the Layers Palette). If you click on the thumbnail or name of the RGB channel, it highlights all 3 of the colour channels.

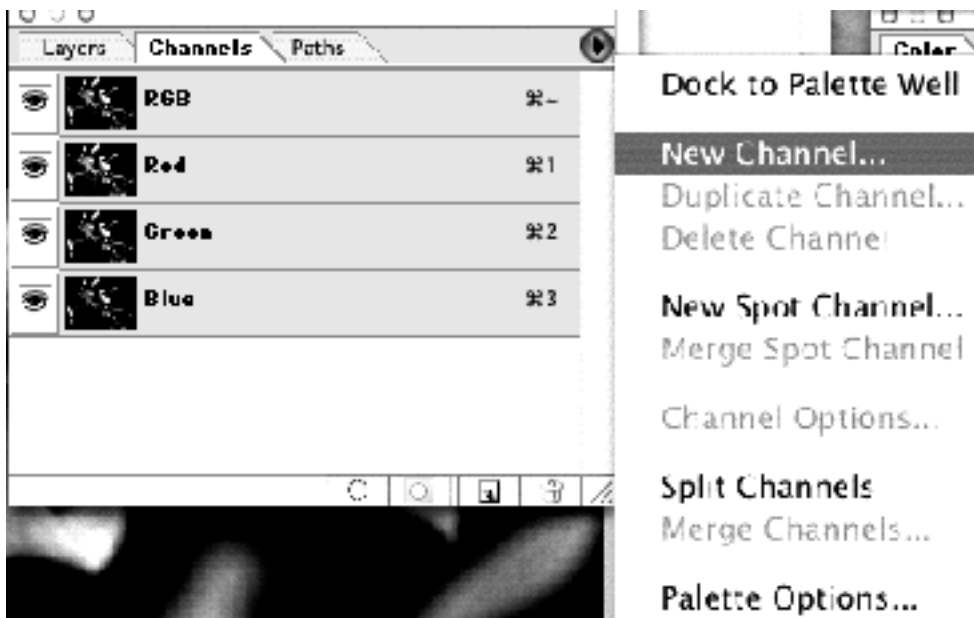


If you click on a single colour channel, you will activate and see, just that channel. Its information is displayed in greyscale. White areas indicate that the colour is fully applied to the image, black indicates it is not applied and the greys in between apply corresponding amounts of the colour.

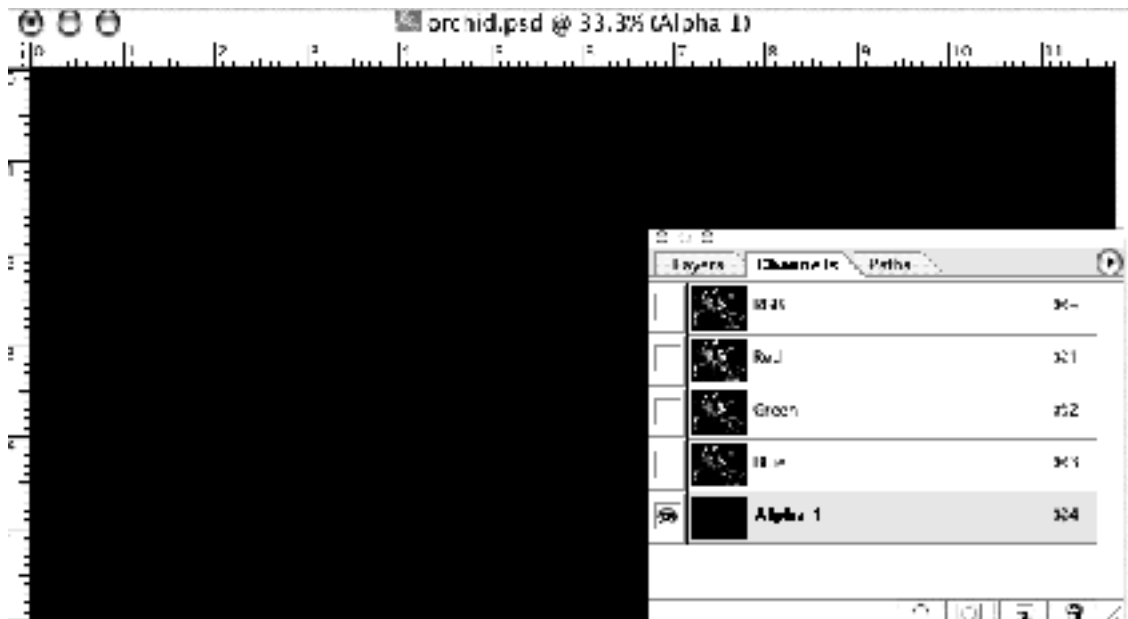
Extra channels - Alpha channels - can be created to use as tools in modifying the image that is made up of the RGB channels.

Making and using Alpha Channels

1. Open "orchid.psd"
2. Drag the Channels Palette away from the Layers Palette so that you can see both as you work.

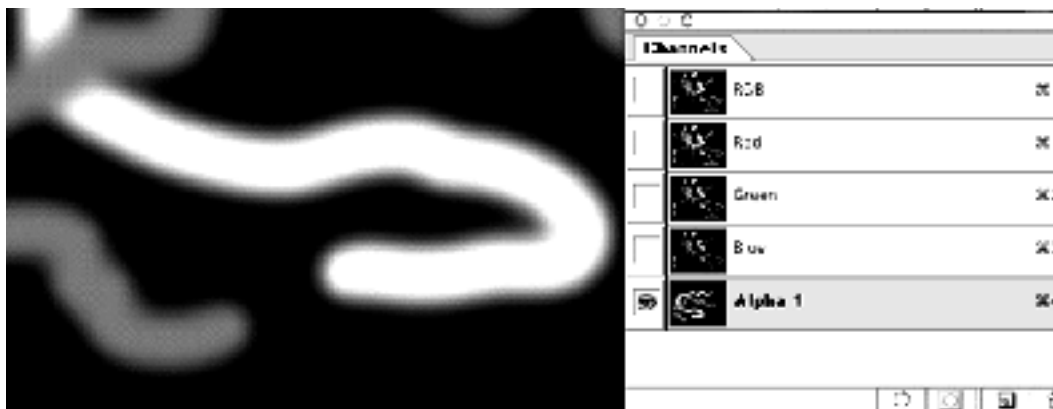


3. From the Channels Palette Menu choose New Channel

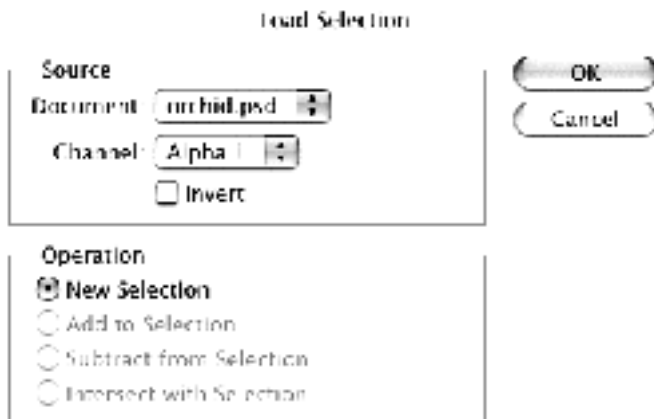


4. Note in the Channels Palette that only the new channel is active and visible.

5. Use the paintbrush to make a white squiggle and a grey squiggle on the black channel. This will be used later to make a selection on the image.



6. Click on the RGB channel to go back to working on the image itself.



7. From the Select Menu choose Load Selection and choose the new channel

This has made a selection on the orchid image that would be impossible to make with any of the normal selection tools. White areas from the channel are selected, black are not and grey is partially selected.

8. From Image -> Adjustments -> Hue/Saturation make a visible colour change.

Areas that were grey, will have the change applied to them only partially.

9. Make another new channel, this time use the shortcut icon at the bottom of the Channels Palette. Call it "text" (by double clicking on its name & typing the new name).



10. Choose the text tool and white and put the word ORCHID on the channel.

This allows all the normal text options but doesn't create a text layer as it would in image editing. It has instead created a pixel based image of the word. If you want to go back & change the text, delete it and type again.

11. Apply a filter (eg; Distort -> Ocean Ripple) to the whole channel
12. Click back on the RGB channel to edit the image

13. Load the channel (or selection) this time by dragging its thumbnail onto the shortcut icon at the bottom of the Channels Palette.



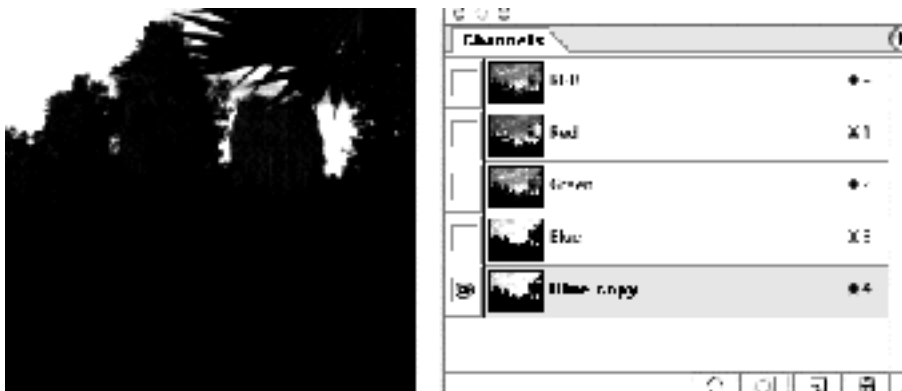
14. Make a Levels adjustment to the selected area to make it lighter



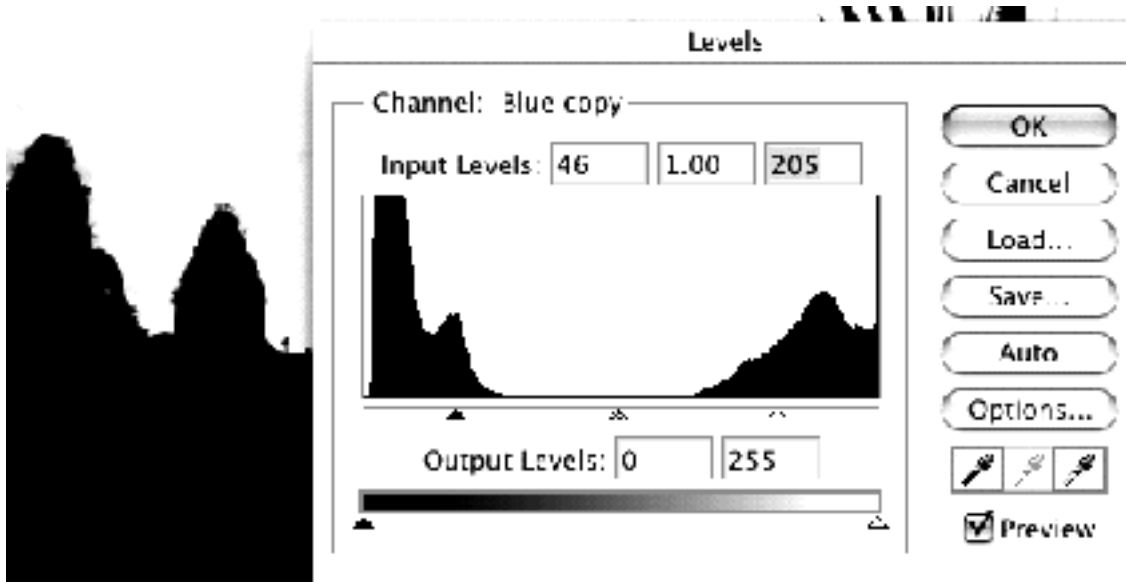
Using a Colour Channel as an Accurate Mask

One way of making an accurate selection is to duplicate an existing channel and use it as the basis for an alpha channel with which to make the selection.

1. Open "angkor.psd"
2. Duplicate the Blue channel (which has the most contrast between sky and horizon) by dragging its thumbnail to the New Channel shortcut icon.



3. Use the Levels to increase the contrast of the new alpha channel until the sky is mostly white and the land mostly black, without losing the detail of the trees and rocks on the horizon.



4. Use the brush and or lasso tools to remove any greys in the sky and land until there is a clear silhouette of the landscape against a white sky.

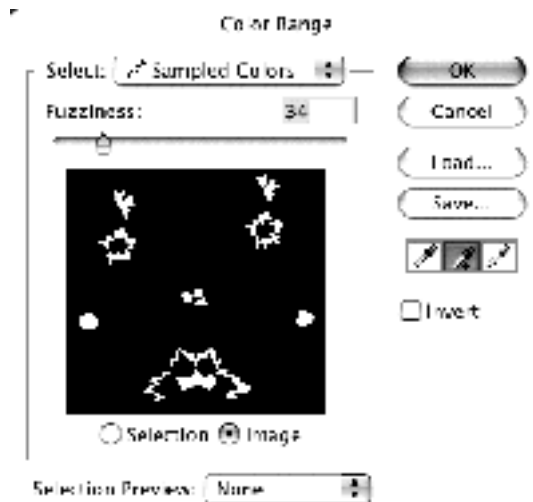


5. Click on the RGB channel to edit the image.
6. Load the selection
7. Change the Hue/Saturation

Saving a Selection as a Channel

One benefit of using channels is that it is saved with the photoshop file and can be re-used to make the selection as many times as is needed. Complex selections that may need to be used more than once can be saved as channels.

1. Open "chinese silk"
2. Use Select Colour Range to select all the pink petals in the image.



3. From the Select Menu choose Save Selection



4. Name the channel being created "pink petals"
5. Deselect



6. Click on the thumbnail of the pink petals channel to activate and view it.

The shape of the selection has been turned into a greyscale image that can be turned back into that exact same selection again and again.

7. Click on the RGB channel to work on the image.

8. Load the "pink petals" channel as a selection

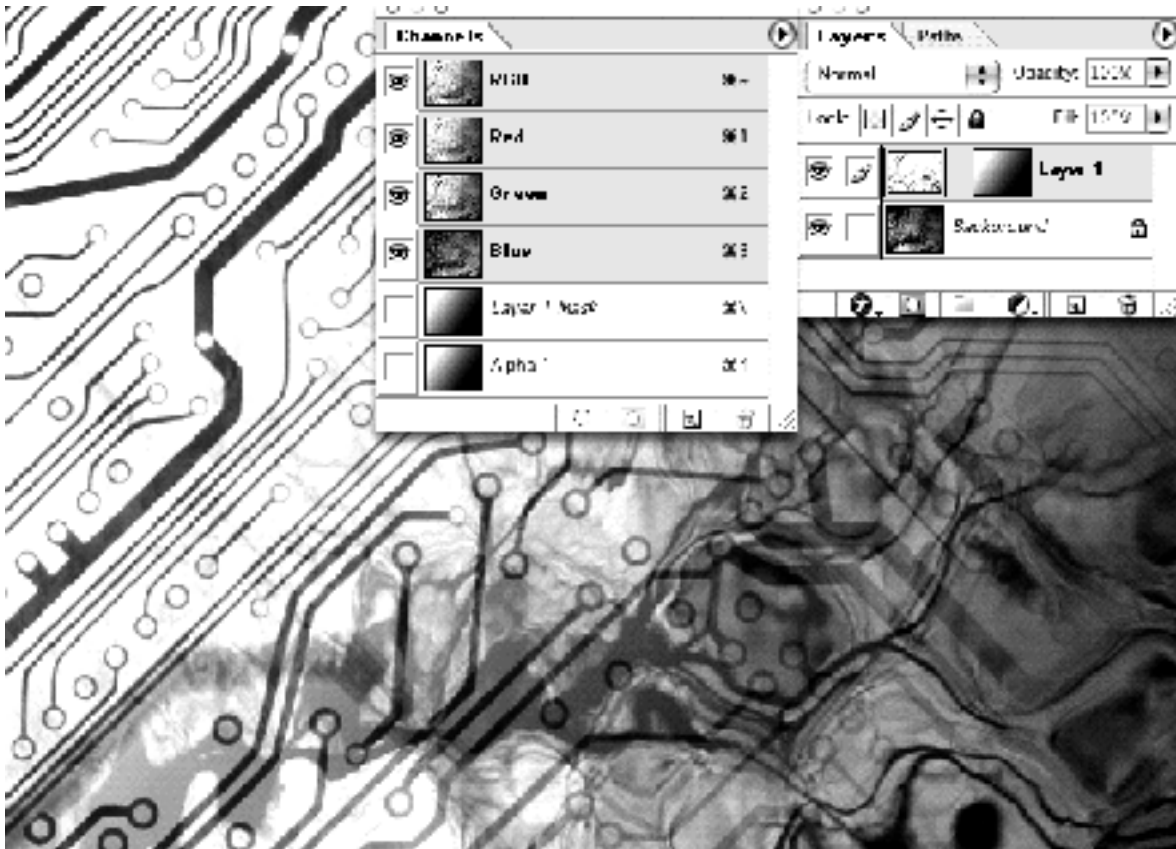
9. Change the colour using the Curves

Channels in Combination with Layer Masks

1. Open "circuit4.jpg" and "water-9.jpg"
2. In the "water-9.jpg" file make a new alpha channel



3. Use the gradient tool to fill it with a black to white linear gradient from top left to bottom right of the channel area.
4. Click on RGB to work on the image.
5. Load the channel you just made.
6. Bring "circuit4.jpg" to the fore.
7. Select it all and copy it.
8. Bring "water-9.jpg" to the fore and choose Paste Into from the Edit Menu



A layer mask is created that is a copy of the channel used to make the selection. Both are visible in the Channels palette.

Try modifying the Layer mask - this changes which areas of the circuit image show or hide.

Try modifying the alpha channel - nothing changes until it is next used to make a selection. that new selection will include the changes.

9. Apply the Layer Mask and save the file.